

A

SERMON

PREACHED AT

St Peter's Mancroft

IN

NORWICH.

On *Sunday* the 13th of *June*, 1708.

Upon Occasion of the

Charity Schools,

Lately set up in several Parts of the CITY.

By the Right Reverend Father in God,
HARLES, Lord Bishop of *Norwich*.

NORWICH

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R O M. xii. † xiii. v. former Pa
Distributing to the Necessity
Saints.



THis is one of those great Duties which
 Paul presses upon the Christians at Ro
 in consideration of their being *one*
in Christ, and every one Members of
 v. 6. *another.* And as no one does more naturally

low from this consideration, so no one either
 more carefully observed by the first Christ
 or can be of more use to those that come a

In Order therefore to make us as sensible of
 Duty as the Believers at any time were, and
 Conscientious in fulfilling every Branch of it
 shall

1st, Consider the extent of this Duty with
 Reasons enforcing it.

2^{dly}, The Practice of the Primitive Christ
 in relation to it.

3^{dly}, The Obligation, that lyes upon us to
 low their Example herein, notwithstanding

ference that may be supposed between the Present and Primitive state of the Church.

ably, The Encouragement we have, to be ready to give, and glad to distribute to the Necessity be-
 us.

I am to consider

First, The Extent of this Duty with the Reasons for pressing it; and as to the Extent of it we cannot doubt but it is as large as the compass of our Brethrens wants, and must take in every thing that is necessary to their true Happiness, and which may be provided for by our Beneficence. The most obvious signification of Necessities, respects indeed the Necessities of this Life, the want of Food and Rayment and such outward accommodations, as are ordinarily supplied by the liberal contribution of those that are blessed with a greater portion of them: But there is no need of relieving our Brethrens Necessities barely to these of wants, when there are several others of a more dangerous consequence to them than these, that fall within the compass of our Relief.

The Mind as well as the Body has it's peculiar Infirmities, and stands in need of suitable Nurishment and proper defence. It is without instruction feeble and naked, exposed to every Temptation, and not able to stand against any Temptation. Unless a true light be held out to it, it is blind and cannot see afar off; apt to stumble at every thing in its way, and to fall into every pit. Without early fashioning and an habitual Guard, led by Passion, and swell'd with Conceit;

furious upon all opposition, and impatient of a restraint.

It is unable to take even the necessary care of the Body as it ought, without sufficient direction, and left to it self is either apt to neglect it or make very ill provision for it: So that if we looked no further than this Life; we could not answer all our Brethrens necessities in it, without considering the wants of their Minds as well as their Bodies.

But when we carry our Thoughts into another World, for which we all of us are, or should be preparing; the want of due qualifications in any of our Brethren, will much more affect us, than any present sense of their Hunger and Thirst; and their Spiritual wants will appear to us the most pressing Necessities.

The next and immediate way of relieving them is indeed by exhortation, reproof and instruction and not by a gift: But when we consider the many of those who want this instruction, do so thro' the streightness of their condition, want the ordinary means of attaining it; that which we give, toward the helping them to the use of these means, is in as proper a sense a distributing, as the Necessity of the Saints, as what we give them for their Rayment and Food.

And this is the case that is at present before us. Here are almost two hundred Children, the Sons of indigent Parents, decently distinguish'd, and carefully brought up to Read, and give an account of that Faith into which they are Baptiz'd.

Write, cast Account, and make such other
 improvements as may best fit them for sober and
 best Employments, when they come into the
 world : And to such Employments by the same
 charity they may possibly hereafter be placed.

All this depends upon your liberal Contribu-
 tion, and the care of those that receive it to see
 duly Employed ; and if your Charity did not
 end it self in this manner, these present Objects
 must in all probability have wanted that in-
 struction, which is ordinarily necessary for their
 happiness both in this Life and that which is to
 come.

They must have wanted their Spiritual Food
 the best means of providing their bodily Ray-
 t; and their Parents must have wanted the
 comfort of seeing their Children, virtuously
 brought up without being burthensome to them,
 perhaps the benefit too of their Children's
 instruction : so many Necessities are provided for
 this Distribution, and they are so many reasons
 pressing the Duty of it upon us.

That Wise but unsearchable providence of God,
 which has so distributed the good things of this
 world, that many want that in which others a-
 bund, whilst yet they all stand in need of each
 others help ; has so far design'd an equality, as to
 effect that the abundance of one should be a sup-
 ply to the want of another, and no part be left
 unprovided : And it is not because God is unequal,
 because Men are unjust that any part lacks.
 God has provided sufficient means for supplying
 the

the Necessities of all, if they whom he has made the Stewards of them were always faithful in the discharge of their Trusts.

We do all so naturally expect to be relieved by others in our several Necessities, when it is their power to help us, that we cannot but own ourselves obliged to answer the same expectations to others as naturally and justly have of our assistance. We would not wander out of our path nor fall down on our way; but look for support and direction, when we find our selves weak at any great loss: and therefore we ought in our turns to be what *Job* was, * *Eyes to the Blind and Feet to the Lame.*

These Reasons for helping each other which are so clear by the light of Nature shine stronger upon us from that of the Gospel; thro' which † we are all Baptiz'd by one Spirit into one Body, and have been all made to drink into one Spirit; How many Members soever we are, we are still but one Body, nor can one Member say it has no need of the other, but even the most feeble, as the Apostle argues, are necessary, and more abundant honour is sometimes given to that part that lacks, that there should be no Schism in the Body, but that the Members should have the same care one for another.

And among all the Instances of care to be taken by one Member over another, surely none is so proper or necessary as that which re-

* *Job.* 29. 15. † *1 Cor.* 12. 13, 20, 22, 24, 25.

make each a living Member of Christ, that which we build up one another in our most *Jude* *Faith*, and provide as far as we can that should be able to give a Reason of the hope that in them, with Meekness and Fear. *1. Pet. 3. 15.*

This was the care of the first Believers, as shall see in the next place where we are to consider

ed, The Practice of the Primitive Christians in relation to this Duty. The very first that Embraced the Gospel upon the preaching of St Peter were together, as we read in the 2d of the Acts, * and had all things common, and sold their Possessions and Goods, and parted them to all Men as every Man had need; The same thing is affirm'd in the next set of Converts in the 4th Chapter, that they † were of one Heart and of one Soul, neither had any of them that ought of the things which he possess'd was his own, but they had all things common, neither was there any among them that lacked, for as many as were possessors of Lands or Houses sold them, and distribution was made unto every Man according as he had need.

These passages St Chrysostome thinks with very good reason are not to be understood simply (a) as if no property remained among Christians, but only so as to denote the utmost readiness in all Believers to supply every ones wants, even to the selling of what they had, rather than they

44. 45. † v. 32. 34, 35. (a) Chrys. in Act. 2. 'ουχ' ἀπλῶς καθάπερ οἱ πατρ' Ἕλλησι φιλόσοφοι. &c.

should not be supply'd ; that they did think themselves such Proprietors of what God had blessed them withal, as if it was for their own singular advantage, but Stewards of the good Things of this Life, for the use and benefit of others as well as themselves : Distribution was made unto every Man according as he had need ; whereas had all been sold and laid open to all, the distribution would have been by some other proportion, but now the only care was that no Man might be Led by the same Spirit and moved by the same Christian inducements, when * Agabus stood up at Antioch, and signified in the way of Prophecy, that there should be a great Dearth throughout all the World, which came to pass in the days of Claudius Cæsar, the Disciples every Man according to his ability determined to send relief to the Brethren, which dwelt in Judea, which also they did, and sent it to the Elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

And tho' these reliefs were immediately of bodily necessities ; yet they had a plain regard to the support and increase of the Faith of those Believers that wanted ; And we cannot imagine that the Parents who were required to † bring up their Children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, were not assisted in this by the Charity of others, who ever their own circumstances made them less able to do it. The care of Widows and Orphans especially, for which we know the first Christians were eminent, could not but extend to the due Education

* Acts 11. 28, 26, 30.

† Eph. 6. 4.

of those Children that were left without help: and if we look into the earliest accounts of the Church, we shall find not only great care taken providing for the Poor; but as much at least instructing all that were either admitted into the Church or were Candidates for it.

A Publick School was very early set up at *Alexandria* for the instilling of Christian Knowledge, *Cebius* (a) speaks of it as having been of long standing at the beginning of *Commodus* his Reign, in Year 180. and *Clemens* of that place has left several of his Catechetical Discourses made to that end.

In one of them (b) he shews that this care should be taken of Women as well as Men, and the ancient Order provided for their being instructed at home, and of this instruction, we may be sure that the poor, to whom the Gospel was more immediately preach'd, and the Primitive Church had a particular regard, were the constant partakers.

St Cyprian in one of his Epistles (c) joyns the same care of providing for the Bodies and Souls of the poor Christians together charging his Presbyters and Deacons to supply whatever was wanting to

Lib. 5. C. 10. Ἐξ ἀρχαίης ἔθες διδασκαλεῖν τῶν ἱερῶν λόγων ἀπὸ αὐτοῖς συνεσῶτος.

Lib. 1. C. 4. Ὡν δὲ κοινὸς μὲν ὁ βίος, κοινὴ δὲ ἡ χάρις κοινὴ δὲ καὶ ἡ ἐπιμέλεια, κοινὴ τῶν κατὰ τὴν ἀγάπην, καὶ ἡ ἀγωγή.

Ep. 6. Ed. Pam. Subministrentur eis quaecumque sunt necessaria, modo ut sciant ex vobis & instruantur & discant quid secundum Scripturarum Magisterium Ecclesiastica disciplina deponat.

them

them, so as at the same time they might learn what the Order of the Church according to the authority of the Scripture required of them.

And for both these wants provision was made in the Conventual way of Living that soon after obtained, and Children, Orphans especially, of both Sexes, were taken in maintained and instructed according to the Rules we find in St Basil. (d)

And tho' this method piously begun quickly grew to have great inconveniencies in it, and the process of time was one of the greatest means corrupting the Church; yet it shew in its pure state the mighty sense that the Christians then had upon them, of their Obligation to take care that all Children should be brought up in the Knowledge and Practice of their Holy Religion.

And that we may not think it meerly an effect of the Primitive Zeal excited by the particular exigence of those difficult times, and more than ought to be expected in the later and quieter Age I proceed to consider,

3dly, *The Obligation that lyes upon us to follow the Example of the first Christians herein, notwithstanding any difference that may be supposed between the Present and Primitive state of the Church.*

There is no doubt but the Cruelty of the Heathen Oppressors enflamed the Hearts of the patient Believers, and proved a great occasion promoting the Gospel at first, as the like practice

(d) Resp. ad Interr. 15. Ἐκτρέφεσθαι μὲν αὐτὰ ἐν πάσῃ ἀγαπῇ κοινὰ τέκνα τῆς ἀδελφότητος, ἀφορίζεσθαι δὲ καὶ οἶκος, καὶ διαδοῖς τοῖς δὲ ἀρσέσι τῶν παίδων, καὶ ταῖς θηλείαις. Tom. 2. p. 10.

some Christians has been since of restoring and serving the Truth of it ; Persecution generally tending to the advantage and spreading even of it self, where the power and severity is not so great as entirely to cut off all that are any way infected with such unsound Opinions. For it puts sufferers upon fortifying themselves with this thought, that they are persecuted for the Truth of it and for Righteousness sake, and others are apted to think they are so indeed, when they find in no ways terrify'd by their Adversaries, but persisting in their own way, whatever they may be made to endure for their constancy to it.

But what particular Zeal soever we may suppose the first Christians had upon this provocation, and how far soever it may have pleased God to remove that occasion of fervour from us ; there is more than enough that remains to stir up our spirits and quicken our Care to promote true Religion among us ; and especially among those who are in the greatest danger of wanting otherwise the benefit of it.

There is no state of the Church so quiet, as to be free from those Enemies, that have been the greatest troublers of it from the very beginning, who are wicked Men and seducers of others into Error and Sin. These will always make work enough to exercise the vigilance and patience of Christians, and to entitle those to an exceeding reward that preserve themselves and others clear and free from this too general corruption. For the Crown of a Christian, is not, as St Cyprian says

in his Treatise of Envy, (a) that only which won in enduring Persecutions and Death, but time of Peace has also its Triumphs upon subduing our Adversary in the various conflicts we must expect to have with him ; there is the Glory of Victory in overcoming our Lust, and the Glory of Patience in restraining our Wrath, and the Glory of Mastering the Spirit of Covetousness in being above the Love and Desire of Money.

There are always occasions for our looking to our selves and taking some oversight of the dangers that are near us ; and when of those many that lye in wait to deceive, some are for obtruding their vain superstitions and others their Dreams, and Revelations upon us ; we ought to use our utmost endeavours to preserve all from these fatal delusions. And especial care shou'd be taken of those who by the meanness of their circumstances are most expos'd to the craft of such Men, and most liable to be carried away.

Nothing therefore ought to be wanting on all parts toward the early sowing the Seeds of our Holy Religion, in the Hearts of those who are live in a dangerous World : And in greater hazard than ordinary, if they are not fitted betimes with such sober and honest Employments, as may under the Providence of God be some more immediate security to them. And as we are under gr

(a) Cyp. *De zelo & amore*. Non enim Christiani hominis corona est, quæ tempore persecutionis accipitur. Habet & pax concussas, quibus de varia & multiplici congressione, victores Pro-
to & subactis Adversario Coronamur, &c.

gations to make this Provision, so we have reason to hope, that if this care is freely and fully taken, it will by the blessing of God answer the end for which it is humbly propos'd.

This leads me in the 4th and last place to consider, chiefly, *The Encouragement we have to be ready to and glad to distribute to the Necessity before us.*

Was it to promote some strange and vain Superstitions, or any Doctrine not according to Godliness, that we ask'd this Benevolence; reason would tell you should withhold your assistance: But when it is to breed up Children in the plain and rational Principles of that excellent frame of Christian Religion Establish'd amongst us; by teaching them the Words of Truth and Sobriety, we cannot choose but wish well to so good a Design, and help it forward as much as we can.

Was it to support some fond pretence of having the Offices of the Church perform'd in a more solemn and perfect manner, than even the Church itself has directed or used; you might justly take offence at such a Proposal: But when it is to make young Persons duly conformable to the Doctrine and Orders of our well settled Communion; and contented as they grow up with the real advantages of it, and humble in the use and enjoyment of them; there can be nothing to lessen your regard to so modest and just an Institution as this.

Was it to maintain people in Idleness, and engage persons to leave the World in order to without trouble in it, upon the care and labour of

of others ; there would indeed be ground enough to suspect that your liberality might be greatly abused, and tend to encrease the burden of the World instead of lessening any of the weight or incumbrance of it : But when it is to train up Children for honest and useful Employments, would in all likelihood have without it been a burden to themselves and to all that were near them ; a regard even to our own ease, as well as the ease of the World, and the particular objects of our Christian compassion would fully advise us not only to continue this excellent Charity, as long as we could, but also to improve the ground and foundation of it.

There is great occasion for it in this place, and I trust there is as great an inclination in those that are able, to have it supply'd ; the Harvest cannot but be plenteous in so populous a City, and I do not doubt but it is the desire of all, that a sufficient number of labourers should be Employ'd in this inviting a Work.

We have the Encouragement of the good success of those Schools that have been longer set up, *London* especially, to stir up our Zeal, and give us the prospect of quickly seeing some Fruits of their Care.

At the last general Congregation of the Charity Schools, a great number, between Three and Four Thousand, appear'd to give God Thanks for their kind Benefactors, and to be exhorted to make the best use of the Opportunities put in their hands, and to walk worthy of the pious compassion that

so freely extended unto them. And we have the further comfort to hear, that those who settled abroad by the same tender provision, believe themselves so as to shew that the kindness and our bestow'd upon them was not in vain.

If any should chance to defeat our Expectations this, as we are not to wonder at it; if after all providing against it, such instances should now then happen; this ought not to discourage our continuing this Charity: But should rather give occasion to think, how many more in such a great number and succession of Children, had in all probability miscarried, if no care had been taken for the due Education and Government of them.

We have all the Reason in the World to conclude, that much good will come of these our sincere and Charitable Endeavours, tho perhaps we may not find so much as we wish; if nothing of this kind was either to be attempted or pursu'd, till we were perfectly assur'd of the full effect and benefit of it, all Charities must be at a stand, and the world left to struggle with the Ignorance and Poverty and Vice of those that at present make too great a proportion of it.

But God be thanked we have a much fairer prospect before us, many already in a way of being made better Members both of Church and State than they would otherwise have been, and many ready to do what they can to add to the Church such as shall be useful here, and hereafter saved.

Perfist then in this excellent way, which have so freely enter'd upon, that your Zeal provoke very many, and this Charity may be ther enlarged, till it take in the Daughters as as the Sons of those that are Poor.

We have reason to hope that God by this will out of these Stones raise up Children unto him, that he will shew strength by their weakness, out of the Mouths of these Babes and Sucklings per his Praise.

And what a joy must it needs be to us to that we have been under God not in boast but re
* a guide of the Blind, a light to them that sit in darkness, Instructors of the Foolish and Teachers of B that we have in this sense redeem'd many from Bondage of Corruption, into the glorious Liberty the Children of God.

It will be so far from displeasing us as it did Jews heretofore, to hear † Children crying out in Temple, and saying, Hosanna to the Son of David. That we shall every day be more and more in with the Administration of this Service, which, Paul * speaks, does not only supply the wants of Saints, but is also abundant by many Thanksgivings to God; To whom be Glory for ever and ever,

* Rom. 2. 19. 20. † Mat. 21. 15. * 2 Cor. 9. 12.

